HALTON
PARISH COUNCIL

IT Policy

Adopted on: July 2025

Review date: July 2026

Notes: The 2025 edition of the Practitioners Guide contains a new Assertion 10 covering digital and data compliance. In addition to requirements related to email management and website accessibility, there is a new requirement for smaller authorities (excluding parish meetings) to have an IT Policy (1.54). To assist authorities with meeting this new requirement, the Government Digital Service has provided a template IT policy. It is crucial to personalise the template for the specific use of your authority and add links to guidance where needed. Some authorities may already have a policy covering the use of IT equipment by members and officers, such as an acceptable use policy, which would satisfy this requirement. Please note that the guide applies to the Annual Governance and Accountability Return for the financial year commencing on or after 1 April 2025 and ending on 31 March 2026.

1. Introduction

This policy outlines how Halton Parish Council manages and protects its use of information technology (IT), in accordance with the 2025 Practitioners' Guide (Assertion 10), data protection law, and accessibility requirements.

2. Scope

This policy applies to all councillors, staff, volunteers, and contractors who access the council's IT systems, email, documents, or communications.

3. Objectives

- - Ensure secure and compliant use of IT systems
- - Protect personal and council data
- - Provide accessible, transparent digital content
- - Standardise how councillors access council data and communications

4. IT Setup

- - IT provider: Cloudy IT
- - Platform: Microsoft 365 (secure cloud-based email and file storage)
- - Access method: Web browser only — no software is installed on councillors' devices
- - Supported browsers: Edge, Chrome, Firefox, Safari (latest versions)

5. Acceptable Use

- - Use council systems only for official business
- - Maintain confidentiality of login credentials
- - Lock or log off web sessions when not in use
- - Report technical issues, security concerns, or breaches to the Clerk immediately

6. Email & Document Access

- - Use only official Microsoft 365 council accounts (e.g. yourname@halton-pc.gov.uk)
- - Do not use personal email for council work
- - Access email and files via web browser only — no app downloads
- - Files must be stored in the shared OneDrive folders provided

7. Website & Accessibility

- - The website complies with WCAG 2.1 AA standards
- - All uploaded documents must be in accessible formats (e.g. tagged PDFs)
- - The council's Accessibility Statement is available on the Halton Parish Council website under the Policies section:

https://halton-pc.gov.uk

8. Data Protection & Security

- - Council systems comply with the UK GDPR and Data Protection Act 2018
- - All data is stored and encrypted within Microsoft 365
- - No data is downloaded or stored locally on councillors' devices
- - Two-factor authentication (2FA) is required for all accounts
- - Cloudy IT is responsible for system maintenance, updates, and backups

9. Personal Devices

- - Personal devices may be used only via web browser
- - No installation of apps, files, or software is permitted
- - Devices must be password protected and not shared with others for council use

10. Social Media & Conduct

- - Users must follow the council's Social Media Policy and Code of Conduct
- - Only authorised persons may post on official council social media accounts
- - Personal social media use must not bring the council into disrepute

11. Roles & Responsibilities

- - Clerk: Responsible for system access, oversight, and liaison with Cloudy IT
- - Cloudy IT: Provides secure cloud services, support, and backups
- - Councillors/Staff: Must comply with this policy and report issues or breaches

12. Training

- - Induction is provided to all new users on how to use Microsoft 365 securely
- - Additional support or refresher guidance is offered when needed

13. Review

This policy will be reviewed annually or when significant changes occur in legislation, IT systems, or council practice.

Appendix A – Approved Systems and Services

- - Email and file storage: Microsoft 365 (web browser access only)
- - IT support provider: Cloudy IT
- - Supported browsers: Edge, Chrome, Firefox, Safari (latest versions)

Appendix B – Accessibility Statement

- - The council's Accessibility Statement can be found on the Halton Parish Council website under the Policies section:

  https://halton-pc.gov.uk

- - It is reviewed annually by the Clerk.

Appendix C – Security Standards

- - Two-factor authentication is mandatory for all accounts
- - No storage of council files on personal devices
- - No unauthorised software or browser extensions permitted